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# The Role of the Purchasing Department

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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# The Role of the Purchasing Department

Reference Number: CTAS-922

The role of the purchasing department is—

- To provide all materials, supplies, tools, equipment, and services required for the organization's operations—at the time and place needed in the proper quantity and quality.
- To secure materials, supplies, equipment, and services at the lowest possible cost, consistent with prevailing economic conditions, while establishing and maintaining a reputation for fairness and integrity.
- To furnish members of management with timely information.
- To obtain the greatest possible revenue from the disposal of by-products and of surplus, damaged, scrap, or obsolete materials and equipment.<sup>1</sup>

Public purchasing is regarded as a service function since it relieves the rest of the organization from performing a function that is common to all. Some *additional roles* that the purchasing department performs in support of its objective is to furnish operating departments with the goods and services they need by—

- Building, organizing, and maintaining formal lists of potential suppliers.
- Assisting end users to design, research, and prepare written competitive solicitations and to evaluate the offers received in response to them.
- Ensuring continuity of supply through coordinated planning and scheduling, term contracts, and inventory.
- Assuring the quality of purchased goods and services through standardization, inspection, and contract administration.
- Participating in decisions to make or buy (i.e., contract out for) services.
- Documenting purchasing actions (issuing and monitoring purchase orders) and making pricing and other nonproprietary data reasonably available to those who request it.<sup>2</sup>

The purchasing department buys a vast amount of different goods and services throughout the fiscal year as requested by county departments. These goods and services run the gamut from the purchase of computer equipment, food, motor vehicles, school equipment and supplies, law enforcement supplies, highway construction supplies and equipment, janitorial and office supplies, to professional services.

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<sup>1</sup>National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, *General Public Purchasing*, (Falls Church, VA: 1991), 1-3, 1-5.

<sup>2</sup>Harold E. Fearon, et al., *The Purchasing Handbook*, Fifth Edition, (New York, NY, McGraw-Hill 1992), 823.

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